

*Toxic Masculinity and Heroism in "Cúchulainn's Boyhood Deeds"*

Presenter Kelsey Mullinax, English

Mentored by Dr. Leah Haught

"Cuchulainn's Boyhood Deeds" is a section of the legendary Irish epic The Tain. The text reveals troubling characteristics of heroic culture in early medieval Irish literature. Cuchulainn displays mannerisms that coincide with toxic masculinity such as defiance and destructiveness. In addition, the elders not only condone but reward the "manly" behavior of seven-year-old Cuchulainn. Due to his success at slaying the enemy, he is not held accountable or punished for his inappropriate actions. Furthermore, Cuchulainn is praised by his community and by those living during the Middle Ages, setting an expectation and a desired persona for young boys. Lastly, Cuchulainn is symbolic as the ideal hero for medieval Ireland and years beyond-- an idea that should be refuted today.